

MINUTES
COMMISSION ON DISABILITY ISSUES
February 23, 2011

The CODI Meeting was called to order by Mr. Martinez, Chairman at 1:40 pm. Roll call was done.

Attendance: J. Martinez, J. Miller, S. Hix, A. Rigerman, R. Fulton, D. Valkema, J. Granda, and P. Edwards.

The Agenda was approved but there was not a vote to approve the January 2011 minutes.

Announcements: There were two announcements:

New Business: Commissioner Sally Heyman spoke to CODI concerning four items.

1. There will be the 4th annual Dog Walk on March 6th presented by the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind to bring awareness to the community about the use of service animals. Hopes everyone attends the event.

2. When she was in the State legislature she drafted the first changes in FS 413.08 concerning the rights of people with disabilities. Among a number of items, this legislature allowed for stiffer penalties against a person who barred a service animal from any business. Since there is adequate legislative redress for any infraction of the law, she encouraged CODI to report any abuse of the law and she would be more than happy to be their voice.

3. She spoke about placard usage at the Airport, Seaport, and Jackson Memorial Hospital. She would like to get support from CODI to change the County Ordinance so only people with placard would have to pay for parking and people who use specialized equipment (hand controls, ramps, etc.) would continue not to pay. This would apply to only parking garages or lots not on the street or at meters. She has seen that many placards are being fraudulently used and this misuse of placards is limiting the accessible spaces needed by users of wheelchairs or other mobility devices. The money that the County would save could be used for other ADA or disability –related programs or projects. Discussion followed.

4. She spoke about the program called Paws in Prison. She would like to see Miami-Dade County Corrections and Miami-Dade Animal services do this program. It was recommended by Mr. Martinez that an Ad Hoc Committee be set up and that Sandra Hix be asked to Chair that committee to look into the feasibility of doing that type of program in Miami-Dade County. Commissioner Heyman gave the name of Lorna Mejia (lmejia@miamidade.gov – 305-805-5982) as a contact at Animal Services.

There was some general discussion with the Commissioner. Ms. Sandra Hix brought up signage and tactile warnings at the Airport Link to the Metro-Rail. The Commissioner suggested that Ms. Hix make an appointment with the Director of Transit. Ms. Martha Fleitman asked about placards or the ability to park close to an entrance of a building for someone who is Deaf. The Commissioner suggested she contact her State Representative (after session) or Rene Garcia, who is a Senator and Chairman of the Health Services Committee, who has oversight of the State program. Dr. Robert Lessne had a series of statements concerning the Airport and Paws in Prison program. He said that lack of money was keeping the Airport from doing some innovative programs for people with disabilities. The Commissioner restated why she wanted to change the County Ordinance to allow the Airport to collect money from placard users and redirect the monies into those types of innovative programs. Dr. Lessne said he had 18 volunteers to train the animals and that Correction wants to do this project. There was some discussion about a dog relief area inside the terminal. Ms. Beltran, ADA Coordinator for the Airport, said that the airport is looking at converting an atrium for use as a relief area for service dogs. John Miller asked a question about the information that was brought up at the Regional Transportation Committee concerning a pilot program for technology in Para-Transit vehicles; the Commissioner asked him to contact her office and she would provide him with more information.

Mr. Martinez said October was National Disability Month and he would like to suggest that CODI support an event. **Motion made by Paul Edwards and seconded by Denise Valkema to set up an Ad Hoc committee to look into sponsoring an event for National Disability Month in October. Motion passed unanimously.** There was discussion about joining with Disability Explosion and a comment to do the event in July rather than

October. Since no one volunteered to be Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, Mr. Martinez said that he would be the Chair of that committee.

Old Business: Mr. Martinez asked Mr. Edwards if he had had a meeting of his Ad Hoc Committee looking into the CODI retreat. Mr. Edwards apologized and said that he had been unable to have a meeting because he has been out of town.

Mr. Martinez asked Ms. Hix to take the lead on the testing of technology on Para-Transit vehicles however Mr. Martinez will assist her in that assignment.

Transportation Committee: Ms. Valkema, Co-Chair, reported that there was a meeting to discuss English proficiency of STS drivers and at the meeting were representatives from PTRD (Consumer Services) and Para-Transit. There will be a “think tank” meeting to come up with material to be included in the PTRD and Para-Transit training of Para-Transit drivers. Mr. Martinez asked Ms. Valkema to begin to review Para-Transit eligibility at her next meeting.

Open Forum: Mr. Marc Dubin spoke about the Department of Justice and their discussion with Broward County concerning Broward’s Emergency Management Program. He reported that Broward County has decided not to sign the settlement agreement with the DOJ. Mr. Dubin also said that many of the same ADA violations that he believes are in Broward are also in Miami-Dade County.

Mr. Alan Rigerman passed out the new State application for obtaining a parking placard. He asked CODI Board to look it over and he would like a few minutes on next month’s agenda to discuss it.

Ms. Shirley Mason from an organization called Beach, Inc. spoke. She said that they are partners with Miami Dade Park and Recreation at Haulover Beach and their organization has been promoting ADA compliance at that beach. She asked CODI’s help in working with the Park & Recreation Department on issues such as beach wheelchairs, Mobi mats and parking. Mr. Martinez said he could refer the issue to a CODI committee.

There was some questions concerning Deaf issue and Jose Granda said that he had been training the Police but because of budget difficulties he has had to stop his training. John Miller asked that the Marlins Ballpark be addressed at the March meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

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